

PRIORITY INVESTMENTS

OVERVIEW

The South Carolina Priority Investment Act (PIA) was signed into law in May 2007. The PIA amends Title 6, Chapter 29 of the South Carolina Code of Laws – the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994. The legislation introduced two new elements to the comprehensive planning process for South Carolina local governments – a Transportation Element and a Priority Investment Element. The Priority Investment Element utilizes the information in the other elements to prioritize what public investments are needed to achieve the goals and implementations strategies of the Plan. It facilitates the coordination of major capital improvements and provides direction for implementing recommended strategies of the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan that call for capital improvements. The Priority Investment Element encourages local governments to examine future capital improvement needs, as well as identify possible funding for these improvements in the coming decade.

In addition to encouraging local governments to plan for long-term capital improvement needs and financing, the Priority Investment Element encourages stronger intergovernmental planning and coordination. Specifically, the legislation calls for comprehensive plans to include: “a priority investment element that analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years and recommends the projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools. The recommendation of those projects for public expenditure must be done through coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.”

Intergovernmental Coordination

While many of the public facilities in Laurens County are owned and maintained by the County, others are owned and maintained by entities such as Laurens County Development Corporation, municipalities, and the Laurens County School District 55. Many improvements to capital facilities throughout the City have been and will continue to be accomplished through coordination and cooperation with a number of public and private entities.

The South Carolina Priority Investment Act requires that the recommendation of capital improvement projects that require public expenditure be done through “coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.” The Act defines adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies as “those counties, municipalities, public service districts, school districts, public and private utilities, transportation agencies, and other public entities that are affected by or have planning authority over the public project.”

Future Capital Improvement Needs and Projects

A number of public infrastructure and facilities needs have been identified for Laurens County for the coming decade through both the required elements of the Comprehensive Plan and through additional planning processes and studies conducted by service and infrastructure providers. These capital improvements include those that will be funded and accomplished by the County, as well as projects that will be funded and accomplished by other entities. Laurens County must continue to explore new partnerships and funding sources to meet capital needs, while ensuring that the most critical needs are

met. The top public infrastructure and facilities investment priorities for Laurens County for the coming five years include:

1. Provision and maintenance of and improvements to public facilities to accommodate the needs of residents and businesses and meet applicable local, federal and state requirements.
2. Improvement and maintenance of police, fire, and emergency services to increase public safety, protect properties, and lower ISO ratings.
3. Support for the expansion, improvement, and maintenance of transportation facilities and services to meet the needs of County residents and promote economic development and growth.
4. Promotion of economic growth and development to create jobs, increase sustainability and strengthen the local tax base.
5. Support for education including Pre-K through 12 and USC-Union, Piedmont Technical College, and Presbyterian College.

Notification and Coordination

As required by the provisions of the South Carolina Priority Investment Act Laurens County will notify and coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when recommending projects for the expenditure of funds for public infrastructure and facilities as appropriate. Copies of the Priority Investment element will be made available for their review and comments as needed.

Capital Improvement Plan

As part of the planning process, Laurens County developed a Capital Improvement Plan (2021). A copy of this plan is provided as part of Appendix B.



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame	Completion Date
Goal. Identify and prioritize public investments.			
Consider relevant existing plans from adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when considering and recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	County Council Administration	Short Term	
Support and participate in the efforts of and adjacent and relevant jurisdictions in planning for future public infrastructure and facility's needs	Pre-K-12 Schools Higher Ed Transportation Agencies State and Federal Agencies Non-profit Organizations Economic Development Aging and Social Services Health Care Providers	Short Term	
Continue to allocate funding for appropriate capital facilities needs through the County budgeting process, as appropriate and feasible.	County Council	Short Term	
Seek additional funding opportunities from federal, state, and local granting agencies and private sources for needed public infrastructure and facility's needs.	County Council	Long Term	
Consider relevant existing plans from adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when considering and recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	County Council	Short Term	